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**May 15, 2017**

## **Alaska State Museums Receive the National Medal for Museum and Library Service**

JUNEAU -- The federally funded Institute of Museum and Library Services has awarded the National Medal for Museum and Library Service to the Alaska State Museums. It is the nation's highest honor for museums and libraries. The Alaska State Museums comprise the Alaska State Museum in Juneau and the Sheldon Jackson Museum in Sitka.

The Alaska State Museums, which are part of the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, also provide training and consulting services to museums throughout the state. The goal is to help local museums develop the services and programs that best meet the needs of their communities.

"These institutions play a critical role as community catalysts and provide vital resources that drive economic development, foster community well-being, and spark neighborhood revitalization," said Dr. Kathryn K. Matthew, director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

The Alaska State Museums hold 39,000 natural history and cultural objects that delineate Alaska history. During fiscal year 2016, the Alaska State Museums hosted 175,000 visitors, answered 3,100 reference questions, and trained more than 500 museum staff from other institutions.

The Alaska State Museums support the growth, development, and excellence of museums and tribal cultural centers by providing advanced technical support, onsite consultations and assessments, administering grants, writing grants to support professional development, coordinating an internship program, and continuously engaging constituents through online media.

"The Alaska State Museums' service to visitors and communities is, at its core, about relationships," said Patience Frederiksen, Director of the Alaska Division of Libraries, Archives

and Museums. “The impact the museum makes in helping the visitor understand the diverse Alaska communities they are visiting, or the professional development opportunities offered small museums and tribal cultural centers, is both positive and long-lasting because these relationships are very personal and resilient.”

“The Alaska State Museums are a vital part of the educational mission of the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, serving visitors and residents, adults and children,” said Dr. Michael Johnson, Alaska Education Commissioner. “The museums conduct exciting programs for students and artists on site. The museums’ digital reach extends into every school by making available online tours of exhibits and teacher resources.”

Attending the award ceremony in Washington, D.C. this summer will be Patience Frederiksen, Director of the Alaska Division of Libraries, Archives and Museums, and a community member who will represent all members served by the Alaska State Museums.

As part of its award, the Alaska State Museums will receive \$5,000 and a visit from StoryCorps, a nonprofit that records the stories of Americans. Each conversation is preserved at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress; some are featured on NPR’s *Morning Edition* program.

For more information, see <http://museums.alaska.gov/> and <http://imls.gov>.

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